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THE CIA'S VIEW

'What makes Hussein so dangerous?'

CIA Director William Webster discussed Iraq and other issues last week with U.S. News Assistant Managing Editor Brian Duffy. Excerpts:

Is Iraq typical of the kinds of new threats the intelligence community faces?

The implications of an unchecked Iraq's seizing another nation in the Gulf are really enormous. It would leave the Gulf dominated by a country that has the fourth-largest Army in the world, controls 20 percent of the world's oil reserves and is getting into a position to coerce cooperation from Saudi Arabia and the other emirate countries, if they are not also taken over by Saddam Hussein. It would pose an additional threat of instability in Iran on the East, and a threat to Israel if Saddam became the Arab knight leading the charge against Israel.

How do you assess the threat posed by a man who controls a million-man Army?



Bush's spy master. *Dealing with a post-cold-war threat*

What makes Hussein so dangerous? Of course, accumulation of a massive Army and a willingness to use it. But other aspects aggravate the situation and raise issues not present 20 or even 10 years ago. Proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in the Third World will be one of our major challenges in the future. It has already happened. We gathered up so many weapons and weapons became so readily available that artillery and rockets and so on became stockpiled all over the world. And those gradually found their way into Third World countries.

But as this was happening, we were also seeing that weapons such as chemical weapons and biological weapons became the subject of both

acquisition and indigenous research and development and production. We saw it with the Rabta plant in Libya. Now, Saddam Hussein still possesses those weapons. He has been moving to increase his capability. And with the chemical weapons themselves, he has been concentrating on longer-range delivery systems. So, we get the combination

of proliferation of weapons and proliferation of missiles. The long cannon that he called a throwing pipe is just one way to deliver weapons of mass destruction at a distance. Iraq's SCUD [missiles] have that capability as well. Although they're not terribly accurate, they don't need to be. Now, with his modification of the SCUD's, he can reach most of the major cities in his area. So suddenly this sleepy, Third World area becomes significant to the United States and its allies.

Have the Soviets been at all helpful?

I think we are getting as much cooperation from the Soviets as we might have any reason to expect, once you put yourself in the other fellow's shoes.